

**Customer Service Measurement Tool
For the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
Regional Evaluation Centers**

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Statement of Issue

The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, (DJJ), Office of Juvenile and Family Relations, (OJFR), investigates a variety of complaints received from both juveniles and their parent or legal guardian. The OJFR is often involved with a parent or guardian when there have been communication problems with a social worker or other DJJ staff and when there are problems that go beyond the scope of authority given to a specific staff member. As a result of these investigations the OJFR has come to identify multiple factors as having contributed to the majority of parent or guardian initiated complaints over the past 10 years. Among these contributing factors are verbal aggression by staff, families not being contacted early and within required timeframes by social workers, and social workers and other staff not returning phone calls. The OJFR has a passive and reactive role with a juvenile's family or guardian; the customer must find or be directed to the OJFR and then the OJFR can respond. While resolving the individual complaints can be achieved quickly, it may not address systemic customer service issues. In addition, DJJ does not know what our customers expect, what benefits they receive, and if they are satisfied with the services they and their children have received through DJJ.

In order to poll a large sample of parents and legal guardians of juveniles involved with DJJ, the juveniles served over a four month time frame at three regional Evaluation Centers have been selected as a representative sample. The focus of the poll is to determine a baseline for current customer satisfaction of parents and guardians with regard to the Evaluation Centers specifically. Further, the customer service aspect of the

OJFR has not become fully engaged with families in seeking to better serve them and understand their needs. A formal inquiry could serve a double purpose.

Background

The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) created the Office of Juvenile and Family Relations (OJFR) in August 1999 in response to Federal U.S District Court lawsuit *Alexander S. v. Boyd* which requires: "There shall be no violation of the Juvenile's constitutional rights in regards to the operation of the grievance and ombudsman system." (Civil Action No. 3:90-3062-17, p. 26) The designated resolution of this complaint specifies that the OJFR will be responsible for reviewing and finding solutions to juvenile complaints and grievances and for receiving and responding to juveniles and their families' inquiries. For juveniles, internal grievance boxes are located on every DJJ operated facility to collect complaints and grievances; they are located in a central, neutral area at each facility. The grievance boxes are locked and opened only by staff working in the OJFR. The same staff investigates and seeks remedies on behalf of the juveniles who submit a grievance. For parents a toll free phone number is operated to quickly address concerns and inquiry, and at no cost to families.

Juveniles are made aware of the grievance system within the first 72 hours they are at a DJJ facility by social workers who will give each juvenile a Juvenile Orientation Handbook. The social worker will then go through the Handbook, answer questions and explain general rules, rights, and responsibilities. The juvenile grievance process is frequently used by juveniles at all facilities and seems to be well explained and understood by the juveniles who are served by DJJ.

In responding to parent or guardian complaints the grievance system is less formal. Parents and/or guardians are mailed a general information packet when their child arrives at a DJJ facility. Within this packet is contact information for the OJFR. An informational phone call is initiated by a social worker for a juvenile within three working days so that any questions or concerns can be quickly addressed for parents and/or guardians with their child's assigned social worker.

Agency Goals

In the DJJ Agency Accountability Report, Category 3-Customer and Market Focus, DJJ identifies who DJJ's customer groups are and what services DJJ is mandated to provide to each of them, and in general terms the benefits of reformed juveniles for society. However, within topic question number four: "How do you measure customer/stakeholder satisfaction?" (Byars 2008 p. 25-26), the only example given of survey methodology used is in reference to the satisfaction of crime victim's within a crime victim's survey. DJJ will benefit from more comprehensive use of survey tools to gauge the actual administration of services to this valued group of customers: parents and guardians.

Data Collection

The goal of this project has been to obtain feedback from parents and guardians of juveniles who were recently placed at one of DJJ's three regional evaluation centers: 1. Upstate Evaluation Center in Union, South Carolina, 2. Midlands Evaluation Center in Columbia, South Carolina and 3. Coastal Evaluation Center in Ridgeville, South

Carolina. The timeframe for which feedback has been gathered from parents and guardians has centered on Juveniles placed in an Evaluation Center between July 1, 2009 and November 1, 2009. The information that feedback has been gathered on the following topics: perceptions of services, contact time frames, quality and type of contact with DJJ staff, availability of visitation and phone calls, and fair treatment of their child.

Data Collection Method

The data collection method used in this project is a mail survey. "Mail surveys allow respondents to answer questions anonymously while providing the opportunity to present the organization in a high-quality, standardized manner." (Wing 1997, p. 50) Many of the families of juveniles served by DJJ are difficult to reach by telephone and in order to get an accurate measure of the services that have been delivered and satisfaction with those services, an anonymous response is preferred. A mail survey required less use of staff time and additionally reduced long distance calling expenses and, "written questionnaires eliminate the potential bias of interviewer error." (Wing 1997, p. 50)

The survey was mailed to all parents and legal guardians of juveniles placed in a DJJ Regional Evaluation Center between July 1, 2009 and November 1, 2009. The actual survey was mailed on a postage paid postcard the week of November 23, 2009 to the parents or legal guardians of all 499 juveniles who met the contact criteria. See Appendix 1.

Data Analysis and Findings

On October 30, 2009 a sample survey was sent to 12 parents or legal guardians of juveniles who had completed an evaluation within the past 30 days. Four were identified from each of the three regional Evaluation Centers. The first survey consisted of 12 questions and was mailed with a postage paid envelope for return of the completed survey. Three of the original 12 surveys were returned all of them with positive responses to the questions and two with positive comments about the experiences their children had at DJJ. The initial trend appears to be that there are no problems and DJJ customers are satisfied. All parents and guardians reported being properly contacted and notified by social workers about their child's evaluation, none reported that their child had seen or been the target of abuse and neglect, and all rated the satisfaction as "5" on a 5-point scale, 5 representing a high degree of satisfaction.

In the context of limited budgetary resources it was agreed that the costs for sending out the mass mailing of the survey could be reduced by consolidating the survey to a pre-paid postcard costing .28 cents to send back versus the cost of the pre-paid envelope which would include the cost of two envelopes and two .44 cent postage stamps for each survey. The survey was condensed to 9 questions to accommodate the postcard format, some questions from the first survey were combined for the sake of space, but all information needed is still asked. 499 surveys were mailed on November 23, 2009 and of those, we received back 36 completed surveys for a response rate of 7.2%. The response rate was less than had been anticipated; however the use of written surveys historically

does not have a high response rate. Only general assumptions can be attributed to the responses that were received as clearly further follow-up will be necessary to determine trends and areas of more specific concern. Appendix 2 will illustrate the responses in chart form according to question number.

Question 1: *What were your thoughts about the evaluation center prior to your child arriving?*

Positive	17
Negative	3
Not Sure	16
Total	36

Question 2: *After your child arrived at the evaluation center, were you contacted by a DJJ Social Worker within 3 days for input into your child's evaluation?*

Yes	31
No	3
Not sure	1
No answer	1
Total	36

Question 3: *Did the DJJ staff help you understand your child's evaluation?*

Yes	29
No	5
Not sure	1
No answer	1
Total	36

Question 4: *Was the DJJ staff polite and helpful in listening to your concerns?*

Yes	31
No	2
Not sure	1
No answer	2
Total	36

Question 5: *Did you know that you could visit your child while in the evaluation center?*

Yes	31
No	4
No answer	1
Total	36

Question 6: *Did you receive written information about the evaluation process?*

Yes	27
No	7
Not sure	1
No answer	1
Total	36

Question 7: *Were you able to talk with your child at least once by phone?*

Yes	32
No	2
Not sure	1
No answer	1
Total	36

Question 8: *Did your child indicate seeing any abuse of a juvenile by staff at the evaluation center?*

Yes	6
No	27
Not sure	2
No answer	1
Total	36

Question 9: *On a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the most satisfied) how would you rate DJJ's services? (Please circle your choice)*

"1"	1
"2"	7
"3"	3
"4"	6
"5"	17
No answer	2
Total	36

A section was also provided for "Additional Comments/Suggestions"

15 surveys had a variety of comments or suggestions included in this area, one person wrote an additional letter of concern mailed together with the survey.

The toll free number for the Ombudsman and Juvenile and Family Relations Manager was listed for any additional comments or questions. Three calls were received two involved notifying us that we had the wrong address and one that the survey was sent addressed to someone who was not the parent or legal guardian.

The final section states: If you would like us to contact you please provide us with your name and phone number, (with a blank space provided). Eight parents requested and received a follow-up call. One of the survey respondents who requested a call also checked "yes" to question number 8 'that their child had observed abuse of a juvenile by staff', however, when speaking with this parent the question had been misread and answered in the affirmative in error. Four of these calls were stemming from complaints

and have since been addressed and resolved. And four call-backs were regarding positive feedback about a specific employee or positive changes in their child.

Cause and Solutions

Question 1 responses regarding perceptions of the Evaluation Center prior to their child's arrival would tend to indicate that parents are split between having enough information to give them a positive impression of the Evaluation Centers and the other half of parents who are unsure what to think about the Evaluation Centers. A likely reason for an unsure response would be not enough information being given to some parents about the evaluation center at the point in time that a child is involved primarily with an individual County office. DJJ County office staff needs to be continually prepared to discuss the possibility, purpose, and general information about the Evaluation Center with parents whose children have been ordered to receive a residential evaluation.

Question 6 responses regarding the receipt of written information about the evaluation process indicate that seven of the 36 respondents did not receive written information about the evaluation process. A variety of factors could be involved with the problem identified by this question as evidenced by the contact calls made to the DJJ Ombudsman referencing wrong addresses and/or names. The mailing address for sending out this written information is held in a central database and must be updated by staff in the County office who can confirm the address change. It is not uncommon for the families of DJJ clients to move multiple times within one year and for the address to be wrong for mailing this information. A better way to convey this information would be through face to face contact. County office staff will deliver this information in the hands

of parents at the time that their child is ordered to receive a residential evaluation in court.

Question 8 responses regarding a child seeing abuse of a juvenile by staff at the evaluation center indicate that six parents are reporting that their child observed this type of abuse. In speaking with one of the parents who asked for a follow-up call and had checked “yes” on this question in error, some responses in the affirmative to this question may be related to question placement in relation to the preceding questions. Most respondents checked “yes” to the prior six questions, Question 8 being the last one on that side of the postcard. If a respondent does not read carefully they could fall into a pattern of answering in the affirmative to indicate that their child experienced no problems in the preceding questions and not realize that answering in the affirmative indicates their child witnessed abuse. None of the parents who answered this question in the affirmative gave further elaboration on the abuse, made a request for a call back to discuss the abuse or initiated a call to report this abuse. Therefore, all that can be done with these responses is to continue to be vigilant and aware of the activities within the evaluation centers and by ensuring that both parents, and juveniles understand how to report any allegation of abuse and neglect. In future surveys of this type I would relocate this question to determine if it would be read more clearly and/or specifically ask a Part 2 to this question, ‘may we contact you to discuss this allegation of abuse further’.

Implementation Plan

1. The Ombudsman will meet with Regional County Office Directors to share the findings and discuss the implications of the survey. Implementing procedures for

giving parents evaluation center information before or as soon as possible after their child has been ordered to receive a residential evaluation will be discussed. Timeframes for training staff on this procedure and for keeping this information current annually will be established.

2. The Ombudsman will meet with Evaluation Center management staff and share the survey results to include specific staff accolades. Each manager will be asked to share with their staff the results of the survey and the likelihood of random customer service surveys in the future.
3. The Ombudsman will meet with Policy and Planning staff at DJJ about funding for future surveys and modifying surveys for different target groups: the parents/guardians of juveniles who are placed at the Broad River Road Complex, the parents/guardians of juveniles who are placed in Wilderness Camps, and the parents/guardians of juveniles who are being served in their community on probation and parole. In addition there may be ways to improve the response rate through changing the delivery method of the survey or making the language and format used in the survey simpler to understand for all parents and guardians regardless of their level of education or literacy.
4. The Ombudsman will meet with the Rehabilitative Services Deputy Director at DJJ about the types of grievances and concerns that may be appropriately looked at through a future survey.
5. The Ombudsman will update the Annual Accountability Report with the customer service activities that have been completed to date and plans for future customer responsive services.

Timeframes and Costs

There are minimal associated costs with meetings: gas, meals and the time out of the office to travel and attend the meetings. These meeting will take place before the beginning of the 2010-2011 fiscal year or within the next 3 months. The cost of each individual survey is .72 cents in postage; .44 cents for an envelope and .28 cents for a postcard. This most recent survey cost \$367.92, and subsequent surveys will likely cost a similar amount or less. Comparable timeframes at other facilities will be extended as the length of stay and turnover of clients is greater than 90 days. Considerations will include the time it takes to review and input survey data into a useable form.

Potential obstacles

This survey had a response rate of 7.2%. Executive management concerns may focus on the cost of doing this type of survey in the future if the information received does not conclusively state that there is a problem and the response percentage remains low. In order to overcome this obstacle the best way to approach this will be through established efforts that DJJ already undertakes in efforts toward continuous improvement with the Performance Based Standards (PBS) workgroups at each facility and within each of two divisions: Rehabilitative services and Community programs. At DJJ young people are served at either a long term secure facility, which encompasses all of the areas for which the division of Rehabilitative services has authority or the young person is served in a short term secure program, community placement or DJJ County office supervision which fall under the oversight of the Community programs division.

Evaluation Method

Future evaluation methods will center on comparing base results of this type of survey with future survey results. There will need to be an examination of the impact from amending procedures, confirming expectations of job performance, and reinforcing through training modules.

Summary and Recommendations

Responses to Question 1 and 6 are both tied to receiving information in a timely manner. Half of the parents who responded were unsure what to expect from a DJJ Evaluation Center prior to their child being ordered to an Evaluation Center. A substantial amount of the uncertainty and fear involved in this process could be taken away if parents had enough information as soon as possible.

Nearly one-fifth (19.4%) of responding parents/legal guardians received no written information about the Evaluation Center process. In order for this to change quickly and with the desired outcome of all parents receiving this information prior to their child arriving at an Evaluation Center, the DJJ County office staff must have ownership of the written information process. DJJ County office staff will verify that each parent or guardian who attends court with their child and their child receives an order of evaluation, that parent or guardian will receive a copy of this information on the same day. If a parent or legal guardian is not in court with a juvenile, a procedure for verifying a mailing address and sending this information should be used as a back-up.

Although six parents (16.6% of respondents) checked the box indicating that their child witnessed abuse of a juvenile by staff, there has been no additional investigable concern/allegation brought about through the use of this survey tool. Parents need to be as aware as juveniles are of the grievance process. In each facility there are multiple locked grievance boxes that juveniles have access to in order to report allegations of concern, abuse and neglect; provided, however, parents need to be made aware of the contact information for OJFR if they want to make a complaint or allegation report. Increasing parent awareness of the OJFR office and its role at DJJ will be a more important focus for the future.

Works Cited

1. Byars, William R., *2008-2009 South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice Annual Accountability Report* <<http://www.state.sc.us/djj/pdfs/2009-Accountability-Report.pdf>>
2. Alexander S. v. Boyd, Civil Action No.3:90-3062-17 U.S. Dist. (D.S.C.C.D. 1999)
3. Puritz, Patricia and Scali, Mary Ann, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Beyond the Walls: Improving Conditions of Confinement for Youth in Custody*. Washington: GPO, 1997. Print.
4. Wing, Michael. *Talking with your Customers: What They Will Tell You About Your Business When You Ask the Right Questions*. Chicago: Upstart Publishing Company, 1997. Print.

Glossary

DJJ - The cabinet agency of South Carolina state government that serves delinquent youth primarily between the ages of 11-18 after they have been adjudicated delinquent in family court.

OJFR –The Office of Juvenile and Family Relations is a section within the division of the Office of the Inspector General that investigates complaints, allegations and grievances and then seeks equitable resolution as needed.

Ombudsman- “A person or body that protects citizens against governmental abuses and helps to resolve citizen complaints sympathetically and informally.” (Puritz and Scali 1998)

Juveniles- A person ages 11-18, male or female, who has been adjudicated delinquent in family court and has been ordered to be involved in some way with DJJ.

Evaluation Center- One of three regional short-term facilities which serve youth for up to 90 days.

County Office- One of 43 DJJ locations placed within access of every County in South Carolina. These 43 locations provide initial screening of juveniles prior to adjudication, provide probation and parole supervision, and serve as a valuable court and community resource on juvenile delinquency issues.

Evaluation- A specialized report whose purpose is to gather extensive information about a juvenile’s strengths and needs as requested by a family court judge. A family court judge uses the information found within this report to create an order that will serve the best interest of the juvenile, his/her family/guardian and community.

(Glossary continued)

Staff- Any employee of DJJ to include, without limitation, security employees, social workers, psychologists, nurses, managers.

Grievance, Allegation, Complaint- A complaint concerning an incident, policy, practice, or condition within any DJJ operated facility.



Evaluation Center Services Survey



To improve services for youth and families, please share your experience with us.

1. What were your thoughts about the evaluation center prior to your child arriving?
☐ Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Not Sure
2. After your child arrived at the evaluation center, were you contacted by a DJJ Social Worker within 72 hours?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
3. Did DJJ staff contact you for input into your child's evaluation?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
4. Did the DJJ staff help you understand DJJ's procedures during your child's evaluation?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
5. Did the DJJ staff listen to your concerns?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
6. Was the DJJ staff polite and helpful?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
7. Did you know that you could visit your child while in the evaluation center?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
8. Did you receive written information about the evaluation process?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
9. Were you able to talk with your child at least once by phone?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
10. Did your child indicate seeing any abuse of a juvenile by staff at the evaluation center?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

11. Do you feel your child was treated fairly while in the evaluation center?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
12. On a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the most satisfied) how would you rate DJJ's services to you? (please circle your choice) 1 2 3 4 5

Additional Comments/Suggestions _____

Thank you for completing this survey. Your opinion is important to us. Please feel free to contact us at 1-803-896-9659 with any additional comments or questions.

If you would like us to contact you please provide us with your name and phone number _____

Please mail completed postage paid survey to:

SCDJJ-Office of Planning and Programs
P.O. Box 21069
Columbia, SC 29221-1069
www.state.sc.us/djj/

	Yes/Positive	No/Negative	Not Sure	No Answer		
Question 1	17	3	16			
Question 2	31	3	1	1		
Question 3	29	5	1	1		
Question 4	31	2	1	2		
Question 5	31	4		1		
Question 6	27	7	1	1		
Question 7	32	2	1	1		
Question 8	6	27	2	1		
Ranking	No Answer	1	2	3	4	5
Question 9	2	1	7	3	6	17